

# How Complaints Are Handled

## Consumer Protection Services Physical Therapy Board of California

the State agency that licenses  
physical therapist, physical therapist assistants, investigates complaints  
and disciplines those who  
violate the law



**2005 Evergreen Street, Suite 1350  
Sacramento, CA 95815  
(916) 561-8200  
FAX (916) 263-2560  
Internet: [www.ptb.ca.gov](http://www.ptb.ca.gov)**

## OVERVIEW OF THE COMPLAINT REVIEW PROCESS

The Physical Therapy Board of California has authority over licensed physical therapists and physical therapist assistants in California and has the authority to enforce the provisions of the Physical Therapy Practice Act (within the California Business and Professions Code).

Your complaint will be assigned to the Consumer Protection Services Program for review. The analyst will gather the information necessary to evaluate your complaint. Below is an outline of the normal review process.

The Board relies upon consumers and concerned parties to inform the Board when a practitioner has violated the Physical Therapy Practice Act.

### ☐ Quality of Care Questions

When you file a complaint involving physical therapy care and treatment, the Physical Therapy Board will obtain copies of all your medical records pertaining to that treatment. If you have not completed the “Authorization for Release of Medical Records” on the back of the Consumer Complaint Form, the analyst handling your complaint will send you one to complete and sign.

If you fail to fill out and sign the release form, it will cause unnecessary delay in processing your complaint.

When a completed release form is received, the analyst will request the needed records, as well as a written summary of the care from each of the treating physical therapist, physical therapist assistants, or physical therapy aides. Once all the records and summaries are received, the entire file will be forwarded to one of the Board’s physical therapist expert consultants for a thorough review. You will be notified by letter when this occurs.

The expert consultant’s evaluation will determine whether the complaint warrants a more thorough investigation by the Department of Consumer Affairs, Division of Investigation, or whether the Board will close the complaint.

If the review determines that the actions of the physical therapist, physical therapist assistant, and/or physical therapy aide were not below the acceptable standard of medical care, the Board may have no authority to proceed, and the complaint will be closed. If a complaint is referred to an investigative office and a violation is confirmed, the case may be submitted to the Office of the Attorney General’s Office for a formal charge that may lead to disciplinary action against the physical therapist or physical therapist assistant.

### ☐ Urgent Complaints

Urgent complaints, such as:

- ▶ Alleged sexual misconduct
- ▶ Illegal or unlawful prescribing
- ▶ Unlicensed practice of physical therapy
- ▶ Criminal activity and Substance Abuse
- ▶ Fraud

may result in the complaint being forwarded to the Department of Consumer Affairs, Division of Investigation at the Board’s request.

However, if the complaint is not clear, you may be contacted for further information before we decide on referring the case.

The most serious complaints concern those violations of the Physical Therapy Practice Act while the licensee is in direct contact with a patient. These are often the complaints that may go unreported. The only source for this information is you. As patients, professionals, administrators and supervisors – we need your input.

## **The Physical Therapy Board Has No Authority Over The Following:**

Physicians (contact the Medical Board of California)

- 1.Osteopathic Physicians (DO) (contact the Board of Osteopathic Examiners)
- 2.Chiropractors (contact the Board of Chiropractic Examiners)
- 3.Ethical Issues \*(contact the American Physical Therapy Association)
- 4.Hospitals (contact Department of Health Services)
- 5.Insurance Companies (contact Department of Insurance)
- 6.Malpractice actions/civil lawsuits\*\*
- 7.Medi-Cal (contact Department of Health Services or Department of Justice, Medi-Cal Fraud)
- 8.Medicare (contact Health Care Finance Administration)
- 9.Nurses (contact Registered Nursing Board)

\*Ethical issues include “bedside manner,” attitude, demeanor and office staff.

\*\* Malpractice cases/civil lawsuits:

If you are seeking damages and restitution only, you need to seek legal advice. The Physical Therapy Board cannot provide legal advice or assist with lawsuits.

## **Physical Therapy Board of California**

Consumer Protection Services  
1418 Howe Avenue, Suite 16  
Sacramento, California 95825-3204

☐ To discuss your complaint, call:

1-800-832-2251  
or  
(916) 561-8200  
Fax: (916) 263-2560

☐ To check on a specific physical therapist or physical therapist assistant, call:

(916) 561-8200

☐ Or visit our website:

[www.ptb.ca.gov](http://www.ptb.ca.gov)

The mission of the Physical Therapy Board of California is to protect California consumers from the incompetent and/or fraudulent practice of physical therapy. To accomplish this, the Board investigates the background of applicants, administers licensing examinations, licenses physical therapist and approves physical therapist assistants, certifies physical therapist to perform electromyography, investigates complaints from consumers and takes disciplinary action against licensees.

*The Physical Therapy Board thanks you for Assisting in the Mandate of Consumer Protection.*